

1 25. The method of claim 1, wherein the page-creating user may grant authorization to view
2 the personal page to another remote user when sending an electronic mail message to that other
3 remote user.

1 26. The method of claim 1, wherein when the page-creating user authorizes a remote user
2 to view the personal page, an electronic mail message is sent by the computer system to the
3 authorized remote user indicating to that user that the user may view the personal page of the
4 page-creating remote user.

1 27. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing means for the page-creating
2 remote user to include a voice greeting in the personal page.

1 28. The apparatus of claim 16, further comprising profile matching means for selecting at
2 least one other user of the system to authorize that user to view the personal page.

REMARKS

Amendments

Applicants have made a variety of amendments 1, 8, 10, 15, 16, 20, 21 and 22 in order to clarify the invention being claimed. None of these amendments have been made to overcome prior art. New claims 23 to 28 have been added. These claims recite profile searching, electronic mail capabilities, and the ability to add a voice mail greeting to the personal page. These recitations are supported at least at page 12, lines 20 to 30; page 18, lines to 30; and page 19, lines 7 to 12. No new matter is added by the claim amendments or additions.

The Invention

As a result of the popularity of personals advertisements in newspapers, and the advent of the Internet's World Wide Web, systems for providing personals advertisements on the Internet which are available through Web browsers have appeared. To date, however, these systems for providing personals on the Internet merely mimic the newspaper advertisements. Conventional systems for providing personals advertisements on computer networks fail to utilize the added capabilities computers provide over newspapers. For example, conventional systems fail to provide communications between the persons placing the personals advertisements, and fail to effectively utilize the ability to restrict access to different levels of personal information or communications to intended viewers.

Internet and other network service providers sometimes provide users with the ability to generate user-defined sites or pages on the World Wide Web. A user defined page allows users to convey information to the public by displaying text, images, movies, sounds and other multimedia information on such pages. The ability to convey information on such pages, however, often requires that the user be able to generate the page using a programming language or other protocol such as Hypertext Markup Language ("HTML"). One problem with this approach to providing user defined pages, however, is that many users of personals are not familiar with such languages.

Also, these World Wide Web pages provide no privacy. World Wide Web pages are generally available to any user of the Internet. Since the Internet allows access by users worldwide, a relatively large number of Internet users exist. The number of persons utilizing the Internet is generally believed to be at least in the tens of millions. With such a large number of users, it is desirable to restrict access to information on some pages or even to restrict access to some pages.

In accordance with the present invention, a system for generating a page for display on a computer system accessible to a plurality of remote users through a computer network includes means for displaying at a user site at least one template, means for inputting user-data to be included in a predetermined area of the template, means for storing the user-data in a predetermined field of a database and means for retrieving the user-data from the database and for displaying the template and the user-data on a display of the computer system. In one embodiment, the system may be used to provide a personals page for use in a personals-on-line network. In this embodiment, remote users may connect to the personals-on-line network through a larger network, such as the Internet. The personals-on-line network includes at least one server computer which can be accessed by the remote users. The local computer network also has at least one computer software program and at least one database located therein.

The system prompts a remote user to select a page template for displaying the personal page. The system next allows the remote user to contribute text and graphics to the personal page. The system also allows the remote user to authorize others to review the personal page. The system stores attributes representing the layout of the personal page, the text and graphics contributed by the remote user, and the authorization information entered by the remote user in the one or more databases stored in the server computer. The authorization aspects of the invention are particularly useful in the context of an on-line personals system where a remote user may use the searching or other features of the personals system to select which other users of the personals system may be authorized to view the personal page. The personal page may then be displayed upon request to an authorized viewer by retrieving attributes of the personal page from the one or more databases, creating a graphical page display from the attributes, and displaying the page to the authorized viewer.

The user who creates the page using the method and apparatus of the invention determines which other users may view the page. The page-creating user thus has control over how much personal information may be disclosed over the computer network and to whom.

The Office Action

Claims 1 to 22 (all of the pending claims) stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as "unpatentable" over Wesinger Jr. (US 5,778,367) in view of DuFresne (US 5,835,712). In essence, the Examiner asserts that Wessinger Jr. discloses every element of each of the independent claims except for displaying the personal page to authorized users. The Examiner then asserts that DuFresne shows this element, and that a person of ordinary skill in the art would combine this element of DuFresne with the disclosure of Wesinger Jr. Applicants traverse.

The Cited Art

Wessinger Jr. discloses the WebWho database, which allows users to input "mini homepages" in the WebWho database that link to their real homepage. WebWho is essentially an individual homepage search engine. The mini homepages that are created with the system of Wessinger Jr. are *freely accessible on the computer network*. (Abstract; Column 2, line 67 to column 3, line 1.) The system of Wessinger Jr. does not restrict viewing of the mini homepages to other users of the computer system who are authorized by the page-creating user.

DuFresne describes a system that allows software professionals to edit HTML page descriptions remotely and includes custom tags. Access to individual pages for editing is restricted. DuFresne does not allow users, especially non-technical users, to create personal pages having user input text and images and restrict viewing of the page to authorized system

users. Rather, DuFresne presents HTML page description text within a template to a remote software professional for editing of the HTML text – not for viewing the page described. Those granted access in the DuFresne system are not viewers of the page, they are editors of the page description language.

Applicants note that both Wessinger Jr. and DuFresne issued well after the filing date of the present application and can only be considered prior art under 35 U.S.C. §102(e). Applicants do not admit that these references are prior art and reserve the right to provide evidence of invention earlier than the filing date of Wessinger Jr. and DuFresne if appropriate. In addition, the Examiner cites Sharon Jr. (US 5,893,111) as "prior art made of record and not relied upon [that] is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure." Sharon Jr. is not prior art to the present application. Sharon Jr. was filed on the same day as the present application and the present application is commonly assigned with Sharon Jr. to TelePublishing Inc.

Response

Each of independent claims 1, 10, 16 and 21 describes a system where a page-creating remote user of a computer network creates a personal page by selecting a template and contributing text and graphics. The page-creating user is also provided with a system for granting authorization to other remote users of the system. Only these remote users who are authorized to view the page-creating user's personal page may view the page. The system allows a non-technical user to create a custom page and control access to the page to other users of the system who are selected by the page-creating user to view it. This allows the page-creating user to divulge information to certain selected individuals (such as potential dates), without having that information be available to tens of millions of Internet users.

By contrast, Wessinger Jr.'s stated goal is to make summary information freely available to Web users. Wessinger Jr. allows users who create mini-homepages to password protect the page for editing purposes, but does not teach or suggest a security means that allows a page-creating user to limit the viewing of the page.

The security features of DuFresne are not terribly different from those of Wessinger Jr. DuFresne applies an Access Control List to allow access to HTML page descriptions for editing. DuFresne does not teach or suggest, alone or in combination with Wessinger Jr., the notion of providing a remote user who creates a personal page with the ability to determine which other users of the computer network can view that page.

In addition, nothing in Wessinger Jr. and/or DuFresne teaches or suggests the methods described in new claims 23 to 28. In claims 23, 24 and 27, user identification and profile matching is added. Profile matching allows remote users to locate other users (users, as opposed to pages) having desirable qualities based on profile information - not by searching the personal pages. The page-creating user can then choose to grant authorization privileges to other users so found to view the page-creating user's personal page. This gives the page-creating user the power to selectively disclose the information on the personal page only to other users after the page-creating user has had an opportunity to evaluate the other users. Claims 25 and 26 add electronic mail messaging as part of the authorization means and claim 27 adds voice greetings to the personal page.

Conclusion

For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicants request that the Examiner reconsider the rejection of claims 1 to 22 and allow those claims, along with newly added dependent claims

Application No: 08/876,008
Filing Date: June 13, 1997
Group Art Unit: 2776

23 to 28, to issue. If the Examiner believes that an interview would facilitate the resolution of any outstanding issues, he is kindly requested to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: July 28, 1999

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ronald E. Cahill', written over a horizontal line.

Ronald E. Cahill
Reg. No. 38,403
Attorney for Applicant(s)

NUTTER, MCCLENNEN & FISH, LLP
One International Place
Boston, MA 02110-2699
Tel: (617)439-2782
Fax: (617)310-9782
757419.1